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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 8th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 21 June 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Rivero Rosario, Vice-Chair ..... (Cuba)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

1. *In the absence of Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), Mr. Rivero Rosario (Cuba), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

Adoption of the agenda

2. *The agenda was adopted.*

Question of Tokelau (A/AC.109/2016/14; A/AC.109/2016/L.25)

3. **The Chair** drew attention to the working paper on Tokelau prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2016/14) and to a draft resolution on the question of Tokelau (A/AC.109/2016/L.25).

Hearing of representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territory

4. **The Chair** said that, in line with the Committee's usual practice, representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories would be invited to address the Committee and would withdraw after making their statements.

5. **Mr. Gaualofa** (Ulu-o-Tokelau), titular head of the Territory, said that of the challenges facing the international community, the complex and multidimensional issue of climate change was the most pressing. In discussions on climate change the people of Tokelau had a distinct voice, and United Nations agencies therefore needed to allow the people to express that voice. To that end, Tokelau wished to be invited to participate in the United Nations meetings on climate change and oceans.

6. Tokelau was an island country consisting of three atolls, with a combined land area of only 10 square kilometres but more than 318,000 square kilometres of ocean. Given its geography, the issue of climate change was extremely relevant to Tokelau.

7. Tokelauans were New Zealand citizens with full rights to live and work in New Zealand. The administering Power provided some 60 per cent of the annual budget of the government of Tokelau but the country had its own political institutions, judicial system, public services, telecommunications and shipping systems, as well as full control over its budget. Tokelau's relationship with New Zealand was managed by the Administrator of Tokelau, who was a senior civil servant of New Zealand appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

8. New Zealand provided funding to support the priorities of the government of Tokelau, which included strengthening the country's public services, improving the quality of life of its citizens and maximizing its fisheries revenue. In February 2016, New Zealand had provided Tokelau with a new purpose-built passenger and cargo vessel designed to meet the essential shipping needs of the three atolls comprising Tokelau.

9. Following the construction of two new schools and a hospital in 2013, the Government of New Zealand was working with Tokelau to improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes in schools, improve its international fisheries sector and increase related revenue, protect food security, prepare a 30-year asset management plan to create and maintain adequate public infrastructure, and strengthen economic governance.

10. Tokelau had come a long way, and such progress would not have been possible without the generous support of the Government of New Zealand. Tokelau was very grateful for the assistance it continued to receive as it strived to meet the aspirations of its people for a stronger, brighter and more reliable future. It was also grateful for the interest shown by the Committee and the United Nations as a whole in the welfare of Tokelauans. Tokelau was currently working with the United Nations Development Programme to ensure that future development frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals responded to local priorities, targets and indicators. Unfortunately, owing to its political status, Tokelau was not eligible for many of the United Nations climate-change resources, and yet it needed access to those resources and to the expertise of United Nations agencies, including the Green Climate Fund, to improve its adaptation and mitigation measures.

11. In the decolonization process, efforts should be made to meet the specific needs of particular groups, given that the solutions for one country might not be relevant to another country. The free association model offered a great deal of flexibility, whereas independence was unlikely to be of interest to the smallest of territories in the short or medium term. Integration might be a good choice for some small

Territories but not for many because of the perceived risks of assimilation and loss of identity.

12. In the case of Tokelau, the people could make a well-informed decision on self-government only if the support from the administering Power was complemented by support from the Committee that consisted of more than just the opportunity to meet once a year and report on the progress made. New Zealand was complying with its constitutional responsibility, but in areas such as climate change, New Zealand could not be expected to sacrifice the interests of its own citizens. In the discussions on climate change, Tokelau needed to be able to stand with other similar Pacific countries regardless of constitutional status. Tokelau's unique culture, language and traditions would likely disappear if the country was unable to engage directly in the discussions related to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Moreover, as a result of its geography, Tokelau could provide valuable insight in climate change negotiations. The world was united in the war against climate change. Tokelau wished to assume its obligation and responsibility to fight alongside other nations for the very existence of humanity. The Committee should therefore consider how it could provide practical support to enable Tokelau to participate in United Nations meetings on climate change and oceans.

13. The government of Tokelau was working to ensure that the country was in a strong position when the people made a decision on self-government. The spirit of self-determination was alive in Tokelau and the government was determined to establish robust infrastructure that provided the services that its communities needed. The people wished to be in control of their own destiny and that ultimate goal was respected by the Government of New Zealand, which had provided constant support without pressing for self-determination. The government of Tokelau had established a long-term plan for 2015-2030 comprising three five-year strategies. Under the current five-year strategy, it was working proactively to achieve self-reliance and self-determination, and to ensure effective use of the country's limited resources as it sought to achieve a sustainable and decolonized future for Tokelau.

14. **Ms. Rodríguez Silva** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her delegation welcomed the willingness of New Zealand to cooperate with the Territory and to seek ways to allow the people of Tokelau to achieve free expression and self-determination. It trusted that the Declaration would be fully implemented and that, in the near future, the people of Tokelau would be able to exercise self-determination without conditions, direct or indirect pressure, or fear.

15. **Ms. Te Puni** (Observer for New Zealand), Administrator of Tokelau, said that New Zealand continued to appreciate the interest of the Committee in Tokelau and remained committed to ensuring that timely and accurate information about Tokelau was provided to the Committee and the wider United Nations system. As an administering Power, and aware of the many persistent challenges that the Territory faced, particularly its position as one of the most geographically isolated communities in the world, New Zealand continued to work very closely with the Tokelau leadership and its people. In line with its constitutional relationship with Tokelau, her Government's priorities continued to be ensuring that all Tokelauans received appropriate essential services and improving the quality of life for people living in Tokelau.

16. Among the many work streams currently under way was the new purpose-built ferry, the Mataliki, which had been handed over to Tokelau in February 2016 during a special ceremony. The ship, which had been funded by New Zealand at a cost of $NZ12.95 million, incorporated specific elements that had been requested by the people of Tokelau and represented a milestone in improving connectivity between Tokelau and the outside world.

17. In education, the Government of New Zealand had contracted education specialists from a New Zealand university to provide long-term assistance to the Department of Education of Tokelau and its three schools in the form of on-site training and mentoring. A four-year plan had been established to improve the quality of education at all levels and the partnership had already resulted in improved teaching practices and better learning outcomes for children. In addition, the Government of New Zealand had provided a grant of $NZ1.5 million to develop new teaching and learning programmes in schools. The government of Tokelau had also received a grant from the Government of Australia for the production of Tokelau language resources for schools.

18. The Administrator of Tokelau continued to manage Tokelau's exclusive economic zone fisheries resource, which was Tokelau's largest income source, in conjunction with Tokelau and with the assistance of the New Zealand Ministry of Primary Industries. The Government of New Zealand was also working closely with Tokelau on a series of fisheries reforms designed to improve governance and establish a new fisheries management agency for Tokelau.

19. With regard to climate change, the two countries shared the same objective of implementing an accelerated transition to a low-emissions global economy secured by an effective global agreement in which support was provided for countries that needed it and the major emitters pulled their weight. The Government of New Zealand was working closely with Tokelau on its climate change response plans. It fully recognized the importance to Tokelau of having its voice heard and would continue to facilitate the participation of Tokelau in negotiations on climate changes issues through the New Zealand delegation.

20. New Zealand had provided technical assistance to help the Tokelau Telecommunications Corporation to map out its investment strategy and develop technical specifications for its mobile telephone service. Tokelau was committed to improving its information and telecommunications connectivity and New Zealand was assisting it in reviewing investment options. The government of Tokelau had also requested expert technical assistance to strengthen public financial management and, in response, New Zealand would fund a three-year programme of assistance and capacity-building.

21. New Zealand respected the pace that Tokelau alone wished to set as it developed towards the future of its choosing. New Zealand remained committed to the long-term development of Tokelau and continued to provide the largest amount of development assistance that Tokelau received. New Zealand valued its close association with Tokelau and remained resolute in supporting the Territory's remote communities of New Zealand citizens.

Draft resolution A/AC.109/2016/L.25: Question of Tokelau

22. **Mr. Rai** (Papua New Guinea), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of his country and Fiji, said that it was vital that New Zealand continued to provide adequate information on developments relating to the self-determination process in Tokelau in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

23. Following the referendums held in 2006 and 2007, agreement had been reached between the people of Tokelau and the administering Power to defer the question of self-determination until the people of Tokelau were ready. Since that time, Tokelau and the administering Power had focused on improving the welfare of the people of the Territory; building capacity and resilience against the threats posed by climate change; strengthening good governance; enhancing women's empowerment and equality; ensuring sustainable energy security; improving maritime transport; and sustainably developing the fisheries sector and other resources in the Territory's exclusive economic zone. The free, fair and democratic elections held in early 2014 had strengthened the political system of Tokelau and improved decision-making in the affairs of the Territory.

24. Much of the previous year's resolution remained important and, as in 2015, the most significant new development was contained in paragraph 10 of the draft resolution, which related to the participation of Tokelau in regional and international affairs. Such participation was an important building block for its future aspirations. In an unprecedented and landmark event, Tokelau had successfully chaired and hosted the Forum Fisheries Committee and the Ministerial Meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency. In addition, the Ulu-o-Tokelau, as the Chair of the Forum Fisheries Agency, had represented that organization at the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States which had adopted the outcome document, SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. In April 2016, Tokelau had signed the Pacific Islands Development Forum Charter to become the twelfth member of the Pacific Islands Development Forum. Tokelau was also the Chair of the Polynesian Leaders Group for 2016.

25. It was imperative that the United Nations worked with the people of Tokelau and the administering Power as the people of the Territory strived to determine their future status. The ongoing cooperative partnership between Tokelau and New Zealand and with all relevant stakeholders including the United Nations demonstrated the commitment of the Territory to work towards the future well-being of the people of Tokelau in line with their aspirations for self-

determination. The continuing exemplary mutual understanding and constructive engagement between Tokelau and New Zealand was a useful benchmark for the self-determination process for other Non-Self-Governing Territories and administering Powers.

Draft resolution A/AC.109/2016/L.25 was adopted.

26. **Mr. Suveinakama** (Fiji) welcomed the support that the Administrator of Tokelau was giving to the people of Tokelau as they strived to achieve their development aspirations. The relationship between the Administrator and the government of Tokelau was based on the spirit of decolonization espoused in the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and the two were working together closely to effectively address the will and needs of the people. That included the joint decision to defer any act of self-determination while efforts were being undertaken to enhance and strengthen livelihoods. Although efforts should be made towards the political independence of all Non-Self-Governing Territories, the current social and economic development needs of the populations should be integral to the decolonization process.

27. In addition to the issues related to self-determination, the process of decolonization involved careful consideration of such nation-building issues as education, infrastructure and natural resources, which should be taken into account during any discussion on self-determination. That would ensure that a country was equipped to take control not only of its political destiny but also of its future development on all fronts. Tokelau's national strategic plan for the period 2016-2020, which was geared toward self-reliance, provided a good basis in that regard.

28. Any decision concerning the populations of Non-Self-Governing Territories must be made in accordance with their will. To that end, Fiji encouraged ongoing positive dialogue with partners, including Administrators, and called on all stakeholders to remain engaged. With the combined efforts and the goodwill of all concerned, the decolonization agenda could be advanced and steered in a positive direction.

The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and was resumed at 11.35 a.m.

Questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, Saint Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands (A/AC.109/2016/1, A/AC.109/2016/2, A/AC.109/2016/3, A/AC.109/2016/4, A/AC.109/2016/5, A/AC.109/2016/9, A/AC.109/2016/10, A/AC.109/2016/12, A/AC.109/2016/13, A/AC.109/2016/15 and A/AC.109/2016/16)

29. **The Chair** drew attention to the working papers prepared by the Secretariat for information on those Non-Self-Governing Territories. As the relevant draft resolutions were still being processed, it was proposed that the Committee should take action on them during the plenary session later that week.

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/AC.109/2016/L.20)

Draft resolution A/AC.109/2016/L.20: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

30. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2016/L.20 was adopted*

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/AC.109/2016/L.21)

Draft resolution A/AC.109/2016/L.21: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations

31. **The Chair** drew attention to the draft resolution contained in document A/AC.109/2016/L.21, and to documents A/70/64 and E/2015/65.

32. **Mr. Boguslavsky** (Russian Federation) said that the Russian Federation had consistently championed decolonization and the achievement of the rights of non-self-governing peoples and their territories to self-determination and independence. However, looking at that strictly political question in the framework of the Economic and Social Council drew the Council away from its main task of coordinating United Nations

activities in the social and economic fields. Mindful of that, the Russian Federation would abstain from voting on the draft resolution.

33. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2016/L.21 was adopted.*

Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/AC.109/2016/L.22)

Draft resolution A/AC.109/2016/L.22: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories

34. **The Chair** drew attention to the draft resolution contained in document A/AC.109/2016/L.22. As the draft resolution was still being processed, action would be taken later in the week.

35. **Mr. Sevilla Borja** (Ecuador) said that his delegation remained concerned that certain administering Powers continued to use Non-Self-Governing Territories as tax havens. That practice adversely affected developing countries, some of which were on the list examined by the Committee, as it facilitated the outflow of capital that would otherwise have been useful for development activities, including implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He trusted that the draft resolution would accurately reflect the concerns of his delegation.

36. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the administering Powers had a responsibility to take effective measures to safeguard the sovereignty and inalienable rights of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories over their natural resources. That serious matter, which was of the utmost importance to his delegation, should be addressed on a case-by-case basis given the particularities of the Non-Self-Governing Territories on the Committee's list. The Committee should maintain ongoing discussions on the matter and should ensure implementation of that aspect of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

The meeting rose at 12 p.m.